Fisheries	2002 Actual	2003 Estimate	Uncontrol-lable & Related Changes (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2004 Budget Request	Changes From 2003 (+/-)
Hatchery Operations and Maintenance $(000)	55,362	49,952	+306	+7,769	58,027	+8,075
FTE	*452*	*452*		*+15*	*467*	*+15*
Fish and Wildlife Management $(000)	48,547	44,811	+237	+531	45,579	+768
FTE	*314*	*315*		*+1*	*316*	*+1*
CAM (See General Business Operation Expenses)	[1,859]	[TBD]			[TBD]	
Total $(000)	103,909	94,763	+543	+8,300	103,606	+8,843
FTE	*766*	*767*		*+16*	*783*	*+16*

Fisheries

Program Overview

The Service's Fisheries Program has played a vital role in conserving America's fisheries since 1871, and today is a key partner with States, Tribes, Federal agencies, other Service programs, and private interests in a larger effort to conserve fish and other aquatic resources. The Program consists of almost 800 employees nationwide, located in 64 Fishery Resource Offices (including a Conservation Genetics Laboratory), 69 National Fish Hatcheries, 9 Fish Health Centers, 7 Fish Technology Centers and a Historic National Fish Hatchery. These employees and facilities provide a network that is unique in its broad on-the-ground geographic coverage, its array of technical and managerial capabilities, and its ability to work across political boundaries and take a national perspective. The Program supports the only Federal hatchery system, with extensive experience culturing more than 100 different aquatic species.

America's fish and other aquatic resources are among the world's richest, and they helped the Nation grow by providing enormous social, economic, and ecological benefits. Despite conservation efforts by the Service and its partners, many aquatic resources are declining at alarming rates. Almost 400 aquatic species either have, or need, special protection in some part of their natural or historic range. The reasons for these declines are linked largely to habitat loss and the impacts of harmful exotic species. It has become increasingly apparent that the National Fish Hatchery System must function as a flexible and appropriately used tool within an overall Fisheries Program that emphasizes the need to conserve and restore aquatic habitat.

In order to better conserve aquatic resources in the face of increasing threats, the Service has worked with a broad spectrum of partners and stakeholders to refocus its Fisheries Program and to develop a strategic vision, *Conserving America's Fisheries: Fisheries Program Vision for the Future*. The vision of the Service and its Fisheries Program is working with partners to restore and maintain fish and other aquatic resources at self-sustaining levels and to support Federal mitigation programs for the benefit of the American public. To achieve this vision, the Fisheries Program will work with its partners to:

- *Protect* the health of aquatic habitats.
- *Restore* fish and other aquatic resources.
- Provide opportunities to *enjoy* the benefits of healthy aquatic resources.

The strategic vision identifies seven areas of emphasis with associated goals, objectives, and actions. They are:

- Partnerships and Accountability
- Aquatic Species Conservation and Management
- Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management
- Public Use
- Cooperation with Native Americans
- Leadership in Science and Technology
- Workforce Management.

Strategic planning for the Fisheries Program is proceeding parallel to strategic planning efforts by the Department and the Service. They are closely coordinated to ensure consistency among the three levels of management. Fisheries Program activities support four goals under the Department's draft strategic plan:

- Resource Protection - Improve the Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources
- Resource Protection - Sustainable Biological Communities
- Recreation - Ensure Quality Experience and Enjoyment of Natural and Cultural Resources on DOI Managed and Partnered Lands and Waters
- Serving Communities - Fulfill Indian Trust Responsibilities

To implement the strategic vision, each of the Service's Regions and its headquarters office will work with partners to develop 5-year step-down plans to identify priority actions that contribute to the strategic vision, and performance targets that link back to Departmental and Service strategic plans. The step-down plans will be rolled back up and assembled into the Strategic Plan for the Service's Fisheries Program. The Program will use its Fisheries Information System (including the Fisheries Operational Needs System, FONS) to identify priority projects and to track performance. The National Fish Hatchery System was among the initial 20% of Federal programs assessed by the Administration with the new Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) during the FY2004 budget formulation cycle. The assessment found that the NFHS had refocused its role from providing sport fish to a more diversified and balanced mission of restoring native species, recovering T&E species, and supporting mitigation programs. Program planning received high scores, but needed clearer links between budget and performance goals. Subsequently, new long-term goals linked to the DOI Strategic Plan and the Fisheries Vision were developed and are incorporated into the FY 2004 Budget. Further, the mission statement in the Fisheries Vision satisfied concerns bout the statement of the NFHS's program purpose raised in the PART.

The Service will increase its emphasis on habitat protection and restoration both within the Fisheries Program and in related program areas. Within the Fisheries Program, the strategic vision calls for an increased focus on aquatic habitat conservation and management by working with partners to facilitate management of aquatic habitats on national and regional scales and expanding the use of Fisheries Program expertise to avoid, minimize or mitigate the impacts of habitat alteration on fish and other aquatic species. Specific actions that the Service will take in FY 2004 will be identified during the Regional step-down planning process, where the Service will work with partners to identify the highest priority areas or issues to address within its limited resources and through expanded partnerships.

The Fisheries Program protects and restores aquatic habitats so that biological communities can flourish. The Program works with the National Wildlife Refuge System through the Land Acquisition Priority System to identify priority aquatic habitats and watersheds for protection to benefit fish, mussels, and other aquatic species. Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Offices manipulate habitats through activities such as removing forest debris to prevent high-intensity forest fires and protect fish habitat, planting riparian vegetation to stabilize stream banks and prevent erosion, constructing fences to reduce stream damage from livestock, and constructing wetlands.

The Fisheries Program conducts habitat planning and assessment to provide information needed for decision-making. The Program works with others to develop landscape and watershed-level habitat restoration plans and to prioritize restoration efforts. Assessment activities determine habitat needs of listed and depleted species, influencing flow rates on large river systems, and identifying priority habitat restoration needs. Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Offices use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Decision Support Systems (DSS) to document aquatic species and their habitats, and provide managers with the geospatial information needed to make sound resource management decisions.

Activities of the National Fish Hatchery System are integrated with cooperative habitat conservation efforts in several ways. Some activities directly improve habitats by providing whole plants or

propagules for habitat restoration. The National Wild Fish Health Survey provides information about wild fish diseases that depicts an important aspect of the overall health/fitness of an ecosystem and its potential to provide suitable habitat for restoration or recovery. Other projects provide "research" fish to help determine habitat requirements and water quality limits of various imperiled species; provide tagged "explorer" fish to help locate wild habitats; provide for a cleaner environment through development of water conservation and treatment systems at Service, State, and private hatcheries; ensure that propagated organisms are representative of, and adapted to, their native habitats through genetic analyses of both wild and hatchery fish; and, provide healthy, genetically appropriate fish and other aquatic organisms to re-establish populations once habitats are restored.

Examples of habitat-related activities already occurring within the Fisheries Program include the fish passage program funded at $1,690,000, and the aquatic nuisance species program funded at $5,664,000 in the President's budget request. Since 1999, the fish passage program has reconnected aquatic species to historical habitats by restoring access to 3,443 miles of river habitat and 65,088 acres of wetlands. Funds contributed by partners constituted 73% of total fish passage project costs.

The strategic vision calls for increased integration and collaboration among all Service program areas to better address the Nation's aquatic crisis. Other Service programs working in partnership with the Fisheries Program to respond to aquatic habitat needs include FERC relicensing funded at $1,839,000, the Coastal Program funded at $9,639,000, and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program funded at $38,378,000 in the President's budget request. In addition, Fisheries Program employees will work closely with the National Wildlife Refuge System to provide the needed expertise to help improve aquatic habitats on Refuges.

Through its strategic vision, the Service is re-committing to its role as a partner in conserving America's fish and other aquatic resources. In some cases, the Fisheries Program will lead; in others, it will facilitate or follow. In all cases, the Fisheries Program will focus its efforts to contribute unique resources and capabilities, recognizing that healthy habitats, sound science and solid partnerships will continue to be the key to aquatic resource stewardship.